

objectives

AFTER COMPLETING THIS LESSON, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Discuss the history of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people;
- Understand the epidemiology of bias crimes motivated by sexual orientation;
- Describe the data that has been used to document the epidemiology; and
- Apply this framework to construct epidemiological depictions of hate crime motivated by other types of biases.



*Please do the following
required reading for Lesson
Four:*

- Anti-Muslim Retaliatory Violence Following the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks, Chapter 13 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- Victim Experiences in Hate Crimes Based on Sexual Orientation, Chapter 18 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- The Mainstreaming of Hate: a Report on Latinos and Harassment, Hate Violence, and Law Enforcement Abuse in the 90s, Chapter 15 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- Racial Violence Against Asian Americans, Chapter 16 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- 2001 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, Chapter 17 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- *Hate Violence Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People*

in the United States, by
the National Coalition of
Anti-Violence Programs

So far in this course we have looked generally at how people in the United States think about hate crimes, and how we measure the incidence of hate crimes. In this lesson you will become acquainted with the history of violence against gays and lesbians (and those perceived to be). Like much of the bias-motivated violence in our society, it is an ancient problem transcending time and culture.

We will also sift through highlights of the data collected by modern day government and activists groups (such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Anti-Violence Project) documenting violence against homosexuals, and come to a current understanding about the epidemiology of violence motivated by one's sexual orientation.



Image of the torture of Hugh Despenser lover of Edward II. 1st to be disemboweled then burned.

From The Bibliotheque Nationale de France.

Violence against homosexuals and people presumed to be homosexual has been documented for as long as the lives of gay men and lesbians have been documented. John Boswell (1980) found evidence of violence against gay men and lesbians by Western Europeans from the beginning of the Christian era to the 14th century - revealing an increase of intolerance in the latter part of the 12th century. This was a time of increased urbanization, absolutist governments, and violence toward homosexuals by government and religious officials.

**The Last Judgment. Relief, c.1130-35, west tympanum,
Autun Cathedral, Burgundy, France.**

Relief sculptures like this one served to educate and instruct the illiterate, who comprised the majority of the population. They were intended to strike awe and fear into the hearts of viewers. The tympanum displays the separation of the blessed from the damned. Through sculpture, architecture, and other forms of artistry the fundamental religious doctrine found form, meaning and impact.



The earliest official government action against gay men, according to Boswell (1980), was a law drafted in Jerusalem by Europeans that punished "sodomites" with death by fire. Later, in the 14th century in France, the legal school of Orleans adopted a law requiring that male homosexual conduct be punished with castration on the first offense, dismemberment on the second offense, and burning on the third offense. In contrast, female homosexuals were punished with dismemberment for the first two offenses, and burning on the third.



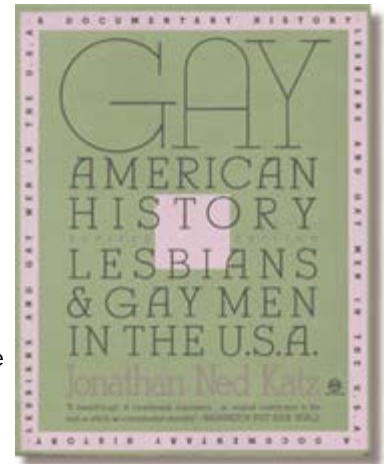
John Boswell's Legacy

*John Boswell was a professor of history at Yale University from 1975 through his death from AIDS in 1994 at age 47. The publication of his second and most controversial book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980), helped him to become one of the youngest scholars ever to gain tenure at Yale. His last book, *Same-Sex Unions*, was published just before his death. [Visit the PBS website](#) to discover more about John Boswell and historical intolerance toward gays.*



In *Gay American History*, which covers a period of over 400 years from 1566 to 1966, Jonathan Katz (1976) documented a history of violence directed toward individuals because of their (real or imagined) sexual orientation, identity, or same-sex behavior.

Historically, such violence included castration, beatings, imprisonment, burning, choking, electrical shocks, and execution. Katz documented many historical moments in which the official government sanction for sodomy or other homosexual acts or behavior was death by hanging, drowning, or some other means. These actions were accepted as legitimate and necessary responses to homosexuality or gender inappropriate behavior, commonly referred to as "abomination," "crime against nature," "sin," and "perversion." Indeed, known or suspected homosexuals were referred to as "monsters," "erotopaths," and "sexual perverts."



Definitions and understandings of homosexuality change throughout history and are culturally specific. For example, in 2001, China's third edition of [Standards on Classification and Diagnosis of Mental Disturbances](#) deemed homosexuality "not necessarily a mental disorder."

Some things to consider before we leave this topic: The aforementioned views and acts of violence against gays and lesbians represented official state policies and were perpetrated by representatives of the state as well as private citizens. One of the reasons our current federal hate crimes legislation took years to pass was the objection of allowing sexual orientation to be included as a category.

For a more recent discussion, [read this article](#).



Senator Helms died in 2008. [See his obituary](#) for a retrospective on his life.

What is the epidemiologic portrait of heterosexism, homophobia, and anti-gay and lesbian violence?

The [National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#) has documented literally thousands of incidents of violence against gay men and lesbians in the United States throughout the latter part of the 20th century.

Collecting reported incidents of violence, as well as many that have gone unreported, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has focused on an array of manifestations of violence against gay men and lesbians, including homicide, AIDS-related incidents, harassment and assault, conspiracy, attacks on gay and lesbian establishments, police abuse and negligence, violence on college campuses, violence by family members, violence in jails and prisons, and most frequently, anti-gay and lesbian defamation.



Critical Thinking

In a free society where acceptance of all people is encouraged, why would the sentiment that homosexuality is wrong or aberrant still exist? What benefits would this notion hold for groups who propose it?

Violence inflicted on groups because of race, religion, or ethnicity has often been explained as a product of resentment or frustration due to a resource struggle perceived by the majority group. How would an explanation such as this hold up in incidents of violence motivated by sexual orientation?



Documented cases of anti-gay and lesbian violence throughout history and across societies provide evidence for this claim made by Virginia Apuzzo, former Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: "To be gay or lesbian is to live in the shadow of violence."

VIRGINIA APUZZO is a long-time leader and innovator in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender movement. A former educator and ex-nun, Apuzzo held the position of Assistant to the President for Administration and Management from 1997 to 1999, making her the highest ranking openly gay official in the Administration. Prior to this, Apuzzo served as Associate Deputy Secretary of the Department of Labor. She is former Commissioner of the New York State Civil Service Commission and former President of the State Department of Civil Service.



Critical Thinking

How would you respond to Apuzzo's claim? Why?

In considering your response, it is useful to ask who is doing what to whom, how often, and with what consequences?

After addressing these questions, try address another central question: Why does this happen? More specifically, what is the nature of the connection between heterosexism, homophobia, and anti-gay and lesbian violence?



In preparation for the FORUM assignment on the next screen:

Read the following articles:

- [3 Charged in Beating of Boy, 17, Who Lived as a Girl](#)
- [Trying to Understand Eddie's Life - and Death](#)
- [More Told in Teen's Killing](#)
- [Man Pleads Not Guilty in Slaying of Transgender Bay Area Teenager](#)
- [Mourners Overflow Funeral of Teen Allegedly Slain Over Sexual Identity](#)
- [R.I.P. Gwen Araujo](#)
- ['Heat of Passion' Claimed in Transgender Killing Case](#)
- [Araujo's Killers Sentenced](#)
- [Life After Gwen](#)
- [Governor Signs Bill to Limit Bias in California Courtrooms](#)
- [No Issue of Sexual Deception](#)
- [Conviction in Killing of Transgender Woman](#)



Consider the articles you just read. Do you think that you can begin to answer the central question we posed earlier: What is the nature of the connection between heterosexism, homophobia, and anti-gay and lesbian violence?

How does this incident compare to other recent violent incidents? What cautions might you apply in making generalizations based on this incident?

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Despite an undeniable history of violence against gays and lesbians, systematic and reliable information on the causes, manifestations, and consequences of anti-gay and lesbian violence is scant. It is only since the late 1980s that empirical work on the epidemiology of violence against gays and lesbians that is needed to address these questions has been accumulating, and trends in violence against homosexuals are only beginning to be discerned. Thus we are only now somewhat situated to provide an empirically derived portrayal of the epidemiology of anti-gay and lesbian violence.

This empirical portrayal comes from government reports, official state data, and self-report studies undertaken and completed by academics and activists within the gay and lesbian community. The [Anti-Violence Project](#) has most recently discerned a new pattern in the epidemiology of hate violence.

It was not until the late 1980s that the federal government began to respond to outcries by civil rights groups and minority constituencies to monitor bias crimes in the United States, including violence against gays and lesbians. In one of the first government sponsored efforts to assess the scope of violence directed toward minorities in the United States, the U.S. Justice Department commissioned a report on bias-motivated violence in 1987. This report found that "the most frequent victims of hate violence today are Blacks, Hispanics, Southeast Asians, Jews, and gays and lesbians. Homosexuals are probably the most frequent victims" (cited in Vaid, 1995: 11).

Learn More!

Learn more about state level hate crime laws in the United States from this [NGLTF map](#).

Let's put it all together.

At this point, you've reviewed the atrocities committed by the state and private citizens against those perceived to be homosexual in the early centuries, the era of homosexuality as a mental defect, and the continued violence perpetrated against gays and lesbians in the present day, in both the United States and an international context. Provide your prediction for the future of violence against gays and lesbians. Supply this as a media headline projecting the state of violence against gays and lesbians over the next ten years (and of course, the basis of your prediction).

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Read the [report](#) cited earlier. Discuss what the data reveal about violence against gays and lesbians?



To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Critical Thinking

Why would there be fewer incidents of violence against lesbians than gay men? Think of several possible factors that might contribute to this disparity.



Official data from state and city agencies confirm the patterns revealed in national data. For example:

1. Reported hate crime in California is increasing. In 2001, the California Department of Justice reported that anti-homosexual crime in California comprised the second largest category of hate crime in the state.
2. In 2001, 21% of the hate crime in the state was based on sexual orientation, compared to 67.5% of the hate crime in California based on race or ethnicity.
3. In 2001, 17.2% of reported hate crime in the state was anti-male homosexual (+21.5% change 1995-2001), while only 2.7% was anti-female homosexual (+3.8% change 1995-2001).

Considering these findings, search the web for more recent findings along these lines and contemplate how consistent these patterns remain or, alternatively, change. (Hint: you might want to look at the [California Attorney General's report](#).)

In addition to government reports, various non-government sponsored studies reveal the contours of crimes against homosexuals. For example, a recent report on anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender violence in 2007 was released in 2008 by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects. Summarizing known incidents of violence that occurred throughout 1998 against lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender individuals in 16 distinct cities, states, and/or regions across the United States, this report highlights the following trends:

1. The number of actual or suspected anti-gay murders in the reporting cities, states, and regions more than doubled; sexual assaults rose 61%. Assaults with a weapon and without a weapon both increased by 6%.
2. The number of weapons reported in conjunction with assaults against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals grew at a fast rate, with the use of firearms increasing 25%; the use of bats, clubs, and blunt objects increasing 54%; and the use of ropes and restraints increasing an unprecedented 244%.
3. In addition, the report documented a 20% decrease in violence committed by strangers, but a 25% increase in violence committed by nonstrangers.
4. Related to the increase in violence committed by nonstrangers, the most frequent location for incidents to occur was a private residence. While 28% of incidents occurred in private, 17% occurred in public spaces. Police were called to the scene in 29% of cases, but in 13% of these cases the person identifying as the victim was arrested. Additionally, there were 215 reported incidents of police misconduct; accordingly, law enforcement accounted for 8% of total offenders reported (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2008).

[Click here](#) to view NCAVP reports from previous years. How do the findings presented in the 2008 report speak to the trends in anti-LGBT violence highlighted in previous NCAVP reports?

Considering these findings, search the web for more recent findings along these lines and contemplate how consistent these patterns remain or, alternatively, change.

Based on these findings the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs concluded, "Acts of anti-gay violence are neither random nor chaotic. They are the predictable consequence of much more fundamental flaws in the nation's social, cultural, and political fabric" (1999).



Critical Thinking

As a critical consumer of data, what questions or concerns would you have about the presentation of these assertions? How would you investigate these assertions to come to a personally informed decision about their legitimacy and magnitude?



Here are even more findings to compliment those produced by the government and activists groups - a growing body of academic studies based on self-report data suggest the following trends.

- The majority of gay men and lesbians have experienced actual violence or the threat of violence because of their sexual orientation.
- Gays and lesbians of color are at an increased risk for violent attack because of their sexual orientation and their race/ethnicity.
- Compared to gay men, lesbians report higher rates of verbal harassment by family members and a greater fear of anti-gay violence; they also report a higher rate of victimization in non-gay identified public settings and in their homes, and a lower rate of victimization in school and public gay-identified areas.
- In addition, a growing body of evidence reveals that violence against gays and lesbians continues to take a variety of forms, from symbolic to fatal assaults; and they implicate a range of perpetrators, from intimates to strangers to institutions such as the state, religion, and medicine.
- Recent studies suggest that the typical perpetrator of anti-gay and lesbian violence is young, white, and male.

For an international perspective, read this [LA Times article](#) about an attack on an Israeli gay center.

Self-report studies reveal that gays and lesbians often are unwilling to report violence directed at them because of their sexuality. For example, von Schulthess (1992) found that only 15% of lesbians who had been victimized because of their sexuality reported the incident to the police, with many of the respondents reporting that harassment is an inevitable part of life as a lesbian.

Comstock's research suggests that violence against gay men and lesbians frequently goes unreported because of fear of abuse by police, fear of public disclosure, and the perception that law enforcement are anti-homosexual. According to McDevitt et al., police say the main reason victims don't report is fear that the police are prejudiced and won't take the event seriously.

Finally, moving beyond these specific findings, a growing body of comparative work suggests these trends:

1. Violence motivated by homophobia and heterosexism represents the most frequent visible violent and culturally legitimated type of hate crime in the United States.
2. Hate-motivated violence perpetuated against gays and lesbians, or people presumed to be gay or lesbian, constitutes one of the most rapidly growing forms of hate crime in the United States.
3. Violence against lesbians continues to take a variety of forms, from verbal harassment to institutional vandalism to murder.
4. Documented cases of violence against lesbians across societies illustrate that physical, psychological, and symbolic violence against lesbians crosses racial, ethnic, religious, nationality, and age boundaries.

For an example of anti-LGBT hate crime in an international context, read this [LA Times article](#).

Do you think there is a relationship between the derogatory and common terms used to describe homosexuals and the continued violence they have endured? Explain why you do or do not believe there is a relationship between language and action. This exercise will prepare you for the next lesson in this sequence.

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



The epidemiology of bias motivated by race, religion, ethnicity, and nationality will become clear in the next section as we explore explanations for bias for bias motivated violence. For now—in anticipation of asking why people do hate crime—take a look at the links below for data on other types of hate crime.

- [Anti-Defamation League](#)
- [Southern Poverty Law Center](#)
- [Islamophobia Watch](#)
- [CivilRights.org](#)
- [Human Rights Watch](#)
- [National Coalition of Anti-violence Projects](#)
- [Gender Public Advocacy Coalition](#)
- [UC Berkeley Fellow in Disability Studies](#)

Critical Thinking

The epidemiological illustration of bias motivated by sexual orientation presented in this lesson provides a framework for how to begin constructing such a portrayal for other types of bias motivated crime. Using the framework presented in this lesson, consider how you would construct an epidemiological portrayal of violence motivated by disability.



summary

IN THIS LESSON YOU LEARNED:

- Like much of the bias-motivated violence in our society, violence against gays and lesbians (and those perceived to be) is an ancient problem transcending time and culture. Historical records, as well as more recent media accounts, demonstrate that violence and intolerance toward gays and lesbians has been more or less accepted (and sometimes openly participated in by the state) throughout the ages.
- The data collected by contemporary government and activists groups (such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Anti-Violence Project) reveal that violence against gays and lesbians continues to be pervasive and often brutal.
- While these data sources are useful in understanding hate crime and crime against homosexuals, many of our data sources on crime victimization have limitations - not the least of which is that gays and lesbians are more inclined NOT to report their victimizations.
- With this framework, you could also develop an epidemiological portrait of other types of hate crime.

